

**Republican Themes**  
**Subcommittee Hearing on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**  
July 12, 2007

1. In 2005 over 24,000 youth “aged out” of the nation’s foster care system without a family of their own.
  - a. These former foster youth tend to have lower high school graduation rates, higher rates of homelessness, and a higher chance of becoming incarcerated than other youth their age.
2. Under current law, support to help youth aging out of foster care transition to adulthood comes from the Chafee Foster Care Independence program (formerly known as the “independent living program”), which provides States \$140 million per year for this general purpose.
  - a. Funding for the Chafee program was doubled in 1999.
  - b. Additional funding (\$44 million per year) has been provided since 2001 for education and training vouchers for former foster youth who attend college or other post-secondary training.
  - c. Some States have experienced difficulty spending all these Federal funds. In fiscal year 2004, over \$37 million was returned to the U.S. Treasury because States did not spend all the Federal money made available to them.
3. Despite this, Democrats will argue for the need for more Federal spending on independent living programs, as well as guaranteeing foster care payments and health care coverage for older foster youth to age 21 or beyond.
  - a. A more logical approach would be first figure out whether *current* independent living programs work, including whether they coordinate with public and private efforts to help foster youth. Right now we don’t know.
  - b. We also should be wary of proposals that would lengthen stays in foster care even more, as efforts to extend foster care payments would do.
  - c. Finally, we should ask how supporters of more and longer Federal benefits propose to pay for that –whether through other benefit cuts or tax hikes, and on whom.
4. Rather than throwing money at the issue, there are better and more cost effective options. One would be to determine what is working now, and promote more of that. Another would be to promote more school stability and higher high school graduation rates for foster youth, which is strongly associated with better outcomes as they transition to adulthood.